

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1051
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11905

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SUBJECT: BREZHNEV TAKES A NEW TACK ON U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF MOSCOW 1116

1. SUMMARY. WHILE THE ANALYSIS OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS
IN BREZHNEV'S AUGUST 16 TOAST TO TITO IS FAR FROM
FLATTERING WITH RESPECT TO U.S. POLICY, IT MAY SIGNAL
THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP IS NOW PREPARED TO MOVE
BEYOND ITS RENENT FIXATION ON THE "ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN"
ALLEGEDLY GENERATED WITHIN THE U.S. DURING THE FIRST
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MONTHS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. BY ASCRIBING THE
"COLD WAR PROPAGANDA" TO A U.S. DECISION TO ESCALATE
THE ARMS RACE, BREZHNEV SEEMS TO BE SAYING THAT THE
SOVIET UNION FOR THE FIRST TIME THINKS IT UNDERSTANDS
WHAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN UP TO AND THAT
THE SOVIET UNION, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE PRESIDENT'S
CHARLESTON SPEECH, IS NOW PREPARED TO OPEN A NEW CHAPTER

IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, PROVIDED
U.S. POSITIVE WORDS ARE MATCHED BY "PRACTICAL DEEDS."
END SUMMARY.

2. BREZHNEV'S ANALYSIS OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS STRIKES
US AS MARKING A POSSIBLE TURNING-POINT IN OFFICIAL SOVIET
THINKING ABOUT THE USG AND AS SIGNALLING THE POSSIBLE
BEGINNING OF AN IMPROVEMENT FROM THE SOVIET SIDE IN
THE ATMOSPHERE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. WE FOUND
THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF HIS PRESENTATION NOTEWORTHY:

--BREZHNEV KUD NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE HUMAN
RIGHTS ISSUE OR "INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS," NOR
DID HE DWELL ON U.S. POLICY IN THIRD AREAS SUCH AS THE
MIDDLE EAST (THE VANCE VISIT, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS NOT
MENTIONED);

--RATHER, AS IF DISCOVERING A NEW KEY TO UNDER-
STANDING THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARD
THE SOVIET UNION, HE CLAIMED "THE MATTER DOES NOT LIE
IN PROPAGANDA... THE POINGSIS THAT THE HOSTILE CAMPAIGN
IS USED AS A SMOKESCREEN FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF THE
ARMS RACE."

3. IN SHORT, BREZHNEV INDICATED THAT IN THE EYES OF
THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP THE RECENT USG DECISION TO
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DEVELOP CRUISE MISSILES AND ALLOCATE FUNDS FOR THE
NEUTRON BOMB (IN CONTRAST TO RECENT SOVIET MEDIA
TREATMENT, HE DID NOT SAY THE U.S. HAD DECIDED TO
PRODUCE THE BOMB) LAY BEHIND THE RECENT ALLEGED USG
POLICY OF ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA. THE OBVIOUS, IF
UNFLATTERING, IMPLICATION: USG STATEMENTS ON HUMAN
RIGHTS IN THE USSR, ON THE "SOVIET THREAT," AND PERHAPS
EVEN THE INITIAL U.S. POSITION ON SALT TWO LAST MARCH,
WERE PART AND PARCEL OF A DECISIONATO MOVE
AHEAD WITH VARIOUS MILITARY PROGRAMS, IN PARTICULAR
THE CRUISE MISSILE AND THE NEUTRON BOMB.

4. BREZHNEV THEN PROCEEDED TO SIGNAL THAT THE SOVIET
UNION, HAVING NOW COME TO GRIPS WITH THE CARTER ADMINIS-
TRATION AFTER AN INITIAL PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO
ITS MOTIVES, WAS PREPARED TO OPEN A NEW CHAPTER IN THE
US-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. THUS HE INDICATED THAT:

--NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS NOTWITH-
STANDING, A QUIET PROCESS OF PEACEFUL INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION WAS UNDERWAY, AS REFLECTED IN THE JUST-
CONCLUDED BELGRADE CSCE MEETING, AND "SHOULD NOT BE

UNDERESTIMATED."

--THE LATEST STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER ARE RELATIVELY POSITIVE, AND "IF THERE IS A WISH TO TRANSLATE THEM INTO THE LANGUAGE OF PRACTICAL DEEDS, WE WILL WILLINGLY LOOK FOR MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS."

5. IN SUM, WHILE BREZHNEV'S NEW TACK ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS DOES NOT MARK AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ACCURACY OF SOVIET COMPREHENSION OF U.S. POLICY, IT DOES SEEM TO MARK A WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE RELATIONSHIP (WITH THE IMPLICATION THAT IF THE PRESIDENT DECIDES TO PRODUCE THE NEUTRON BOMB, THE PROCESS WILL BE SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED). IN THIS SENSE, WE
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SEE BREZHNEV'S REMARKS SIGNIFICANT PRIMARILY AS A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S CHARLESTON SPEECH, A RESPONSE EVEN MORE POSITIVE THAN THAT RECENTLY GIVEN BY ARBATOV'S ARTICLE (REFTEL). PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF RECENT SOVIET MEDIA CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICY (INCLUDING CSCE, SOUTH AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE NEUTRON BOMB, AS REPORTED IN MOSCOW 11807), BREZHNEV'S TONE IN THIS SPEECH IS MODERATE AND RESTRAINED.

6. OTHER ASPECTS OF BREZHNEV'S SPEECH, AND OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE TITO VISIT, REPORTED SEPTELS.
TOON

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